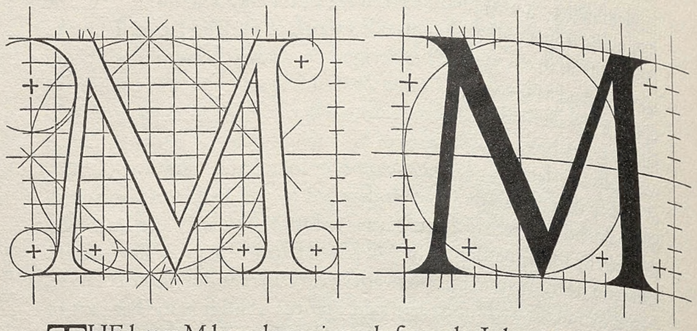

THE letter M here drawn is made from the I alone, and is thirteen units in breadth, that is to say, three units broader than it is high, and, to be properly made, needs six turns of the compass; and I have marked the places where the point of the compass should be placed, to make them.

THIS letter M is like some men, who are so stout that their girth is greater than the height of their body; and, upon this point, let me say that our Attic letters were formerly made by the ancients, some square, others broader than high, and others higher than broad, with covert reference to men's bodies, among which the most perfect and comely are the bodies squarely built, which may be represented by an equilateral angle, a perpendicular line having all its angles equilateral, and a horizontal line, also having all its angles equilateral. Whereof you can read at length in the first book of Euclid.*

MSays Martianus Capella, *labris imprimitur.*† That is to say, M must be so pronounced that, in uttering it, to produce its proper sound, we must press the lips together without moving the tongue, or letting it touch the front teeth, cost what it may.

THE shape of the M is the same with the Greeks as with the Latins, & it is called in Greek, *Mi,* which is as much as to say that M should be pronounced with an imperfect sound, and, as it were, in the interior of the mouth, as in saying, *em;* for which reason some ancients called it *Hemitonium,* that is to say, half-tone letter, as Galeotus Martius Narniensis testifies in his second book, entitled *De homine interiori.* Priscian, where he treats *De literarum commutatione,* says that M has three kinds of sound, obscure, open, & median. His words are as follows: M

* *Entre lesquelz les plus parfaictz et beaulx, sont les corps de honne quadrature, la quelle quadrature se peult figurer en angle equilateral, en ligne perpendiculaire, ayant tous ses angles equilateraux, & en ligne trauerceante, ayant aussi tous ses angles equilateraux.— I transcribe this passage so that the curious may decide for themselves its meaning. Euclid's definition of a square is: 'Quadratum quidem quod et aquilaterum est et rectangulum.'*

† '*Is pronounced with the lips*' —*a labial.*

*obscurus in extremitate dictionum sonat, vt Templum. Apertum in principio, vt Magnus. Mediocre in medijs, vt Vmbra.** 'M', he says, 'has an obscure sound at the end of words, as in *Templum.* At the beginning, it has an open sound, as in *Magnus.* And it has its median sound in the middle of words, as in *Umbra.*'

THE Normans err in the proper pronunciation of this letter M, when it is final in Latin words; for instead of *Templum* they say *Templun,* pronouncing N for M, and *Patren* for *Patrem,* which is not according to the rule of Latin grammar.

HEreupon, because I see many a one, both in speaking & in writing, go astray in this letter M, very often putting N for M, I purpose here very gladly to write down the letters before which M is changed to N, & this according to the teaching of the good Priscian, immediately after the place just cited; his words are as follows: M *transit in* N, *et maxime* D, *vel* T, *vel* C, *vel* Q, *sequentibus. Vt tam, tandem; Tantum, tantundem; Idem, identidem; Num, nuncubi. Et, vt Plinio placet, Nunquis, nunquam; Anceps pro amceps.*† 'M,' he says, 'is changed to N, and most of all when D or T or C or Q follows it; as in *tam, tandem; tantum, tantundem, idem, identidem; num, nuncubi;* and, as Pliny says, *nunquis, nunquam; anceps* for *amceps.*'

I Have said heretofore, in the chapter on the I, that M as a Latin numeral signifies a thousand, & it is true; but also, when it is written alone, with a point following, it means and is equivalent to the name Marcus; as A means Aulus; BR, Brutus;‡ C, Caius, & when it is turned thus, Ↄ, it means Caia; D, Decius, and turned thus Ↄ, Decia; FA, Fabius; GN, Gneus; IV, Junius; K, in our usage, Carolus, in Latin, Calendæ; L, Lucius; NL, *Non liquet;* OPT, Optimus; P, Publius; Q, Quintus, and turned thus, Ꝙ, Quinta; R, Roma, or Romanus; RP, Respublica; SEX, Sextus; Ɛ, Sestertium; VAL, Valerius; X, Decimus. Y and Z are not used in Latin in such abbreviations of Latin names, because they are purely Greek letters; but Z as a figure, in Latin & French, is used for two, and so written. The above-mentioned abbreviations of one letter, or two, or three, as I have given examples thereof, were ordained by the Greeks and the inventors of the Attic letters, which, by reason of their thickness, require to be written far apart, and with much room, because of which thing, one can hardly comprise much substance or meaning in written words, unless one makes use of abbreviation.

* I, VII, 38.

† I, VII, 38. *Tory does not follow Priscian's text exactly, but the variation is very slight.*

‡ *If Tory had been blessed with prophetic vision, and could have looked ahead four centuries, he would doubtless have imagined another interpretation of these initials, not only more significant to the "devotz Amateurs de bonnes lettres," but of immeasurable import to his own fame.*

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